



# Fast Facts

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

PS19

## California Asthma Public Health Initiative (CAPI) Fact Sheet

### **The Problem**

Asthma is a chronic inflammatory lung disease that results in partially reversible constriction of the airways. The condition is characterized by episodes of wheezing, shortness of breath, or coughing that may occur at anytime, but most often during the night or in the early morning. Asthma is considered to be a critical public health issue due to its negative impact on quality of life, increased morbidity and mortality, and substantial economic impact.

### **Significant Facts**

- According to the 2001 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS), an estimated 11.9 percent of Californians (3.9 million adults and children) have been diagnosed with asthma. Nearly 75 percent (2.9 million) of these individuals experienced asthma symptoms during the prior 12 months.
- Asthma prevalence varies considerably by race and ethnicity. In California, asthma prevalence is highest among American Indians and Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders, and African Americans.
- Asthma disproportionately affects children and young adults. In California, prevalence is highest among children 12 - 17.
- Asthma is a leading cause of school absenteeism in children and results in missed workdays and lost productivity in adults.
- Emergency room visits and hospitalizations for asthma are a significant burden in California and throughout the nation. Significant disparities exist in hospitalization rates by race and ethnicity. Overall, African Americans experience considerably higher rates than any other group.
- Asthma related deaths are not common, but the mortality rate from asthma in California is higher than the national rate. In 1999, asthma was responsible for 561 deaths in California, and of these, 19 deaths occurred among children 0 - 19. The mortality rate due to asthma among adults 65 and older is significantly higher compared to all other age groups. African Americans and Asian/Pacific Islanders experience the highest age-adjusted mortality rates from asthma.

- The direct and indirect economic impact of asthma was estimated to cost California \$1.27 billion dollars in 1998. In 2000, hospitalizations represented the largest direct medical expense related to asthma; the average cost per hospitalization was \$13,000.

### **Current Programs and Activities**

- The mission of the California Asthma Public Health Initiative (CAPHI) is to improve the quality of life for all children and adults with asthma through implementation of effective programs and policies in asthma education, management, and prevention. CAPHI seeks to reduce preventable asthma morbidity and mortality, and to eliminate disparities in asthma practices and outcomes through coordinated approaches and partnerships with communities, state and local organizations, health care providers, health departments, foundations, and academic institutions.
- The Childhood Asthma Initiative (CAI) is a four-year project funded by the California Children and Families Commission (CCFC) to address asthma in children 0 - 5 and to reduce its negative impact on families and school readiness. It is a collaborative project between the California Department of Health Services' (CDHS) Chronic Disease Control Branch, Children's Medical Services Branch, and the Environmental Health Investigations Branch. CAI has three components, which include Community Asthma Intervention Projects, Asthma Treatment Services, and a survey of childcare center site directors and childcare center staff.
- Addressing Asthma from a Public Health Perspective is a five-year project that is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It is a collaborative project that partners the expertise of individuals in both the Chronic Disease Control Branch and the Environmental Health Investigations Branch. The program focus is to collaborate with asthma stakeholders to implement priority objectives from the "California Strategic Plan for Asthma."
- The California Asthma Among the School-Aged (CAASA) Project aims to provide high quality asthma care to children 5 - 18. This three-year project is funded through a grant from The California Endowment. CAASA uses continuous quality improvement techniques to increase knowledge and awareness of asthma among health care providers, and to improve the delivery of asthma care in seven community-based programs.

### **Resources**

For more information, contact the California Asthma Public Health Initiative at (916) 323-0852 or <mailto:asthma@dhs.ca.gov> or visit these other related asthma Web sites:

American Academy of Asthma Allergy & Immunology  
<http://www.aaaai.org/>

American Academy of Pediatrics

<http://www.aap.org/default.htm>

American Lung Association

<http://www.californialung.org/>

Asthma & Allergy Foundation of America

<http://www.aafa.org/>

California Environmental Protection Agency

<http://www.calepa.ca.gov/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/airpollution/asthma/default.htm>

National Asthma Education and Prevention Program

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/naepp/>

National Initiative for Children's Health Quality (NICHQ)

<http://www.nichq.org/initiatives/>